



CEMETERY DANCE PRESENTS

GRAVE TALES

APR '01 \$3.95 U.S.

3

THOMAS F. MONTELEONE

JAMES KISNER

GLENN CHADBOURNE

WILL RENFRO

ERIC POWELL



Eric
Powell
98

CEMETERY DANCE PRESENTS GRAVE TALES

ISSUE #3 APRIL 2001

COVER ART BY ERIC POWELL

GROUND WATER

ORIGINAL STORY BY JAMES KISNER
ADAPTED BY WILL RENFRO

THE CUTTY BLACK SOW

ORIGINAL STORY BY THOMAS F. MONTELEONE
ADAPTED BY GLENN CHADBOURNE

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GROUND WATER

ORIGINAL STORY BY JAMES KISNER - ART ADAPTATION BY WILL RENFRO



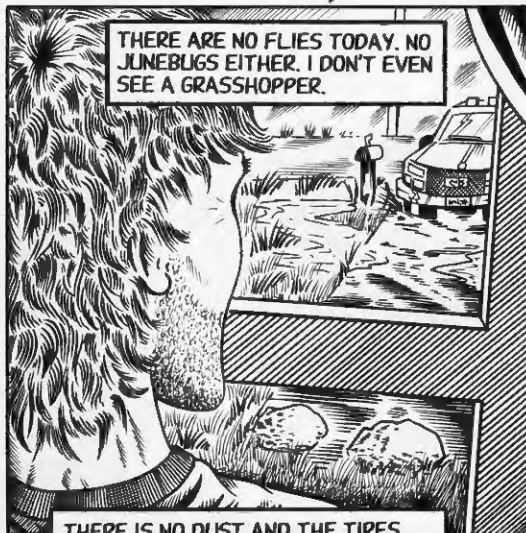
THE EARTH AROUND HERE IS SWOLLEN,
PUFFY, LIKE A PREGNANT BEAST.
THERE'S A SMELL IN THE AIR YOU CAN'T
QUITE IDENTIFY, YET YOU KNOW YOU
SHOULD RECOGNIZE IT BY INSTINCT.

I'M NOT QUITE USED TO THE SMELL.
I DON'T WANT TO GET USED TO IT.

THE MAN FROM THE WATER
COMPANY IS COMING TODAY.



I HAVE MY RUBBER BOOTS
ON, SO I'M READY.



THERE ARE NO FLIES TODAY. NO JUNEBUGS EITHER. I DON'T EVEN SEE A GRASSHOPPER.

THERE IS NO DUST AND THE TIRES SOUND LIKE THEY ARE SUCKING THEIR WAY THROUGH SLUSH.



BUT I DO SEE THE PLAIN MUNICIPAL PICKUP TRUCK DRIVE UP FROM MY MAILBOX OUT AT THE MAIN ROAD ALONG MY GRAVEL DRIVE.



THE EARTH ALL AROUND THE HOUSE IS LIKE THAT: MUD, SLUSH, SLIME. WHATEVER YOU WANT TO CALL IT.



I DON'T WAIT FOR THE GUY TO GET OUT OF THE TRUCK TO COME UP AND KNOCK ON MY DOOR. I GO OUT TO MEET HIM.



THE MAN IS A
TYPICAL OFFICE
GRUNT. ALL ANY OF
HIS TYPE CARES
ABOUT IS THAT YOU
PAY YOUR BILL AND
DON'T PRESENT HIM
WITH ANY PROBLEMS
THAT ARE BEYOND
HIS ABILITIES OR
UPSET THE RELATIVE
PEACE OF HIS TIDY
LITTLE WORLD.

HOT DAY.

NOW, MR. RIGGS,
WHAT EXACTLY IS THE
NATURE OF YOUR
COMPLAINT?

I DON'T EVEN PAY WATER BILLS MYSELF.

YOU KNOW WHAT
IT IS, IT SHOULD BE WRITTEN
THERE SOMEWHERE - IN DUPLICATE,
OR TRIPPLICATE, OR SOME EXPONENT
OF COPIES ONLY A COMPUTER
CAN HANDLE.

I WANT CITY WATER,
I'VE BEEN ASKING FOR IT
FOR YEARS.

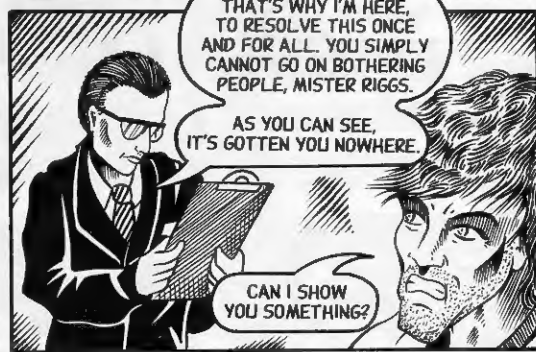
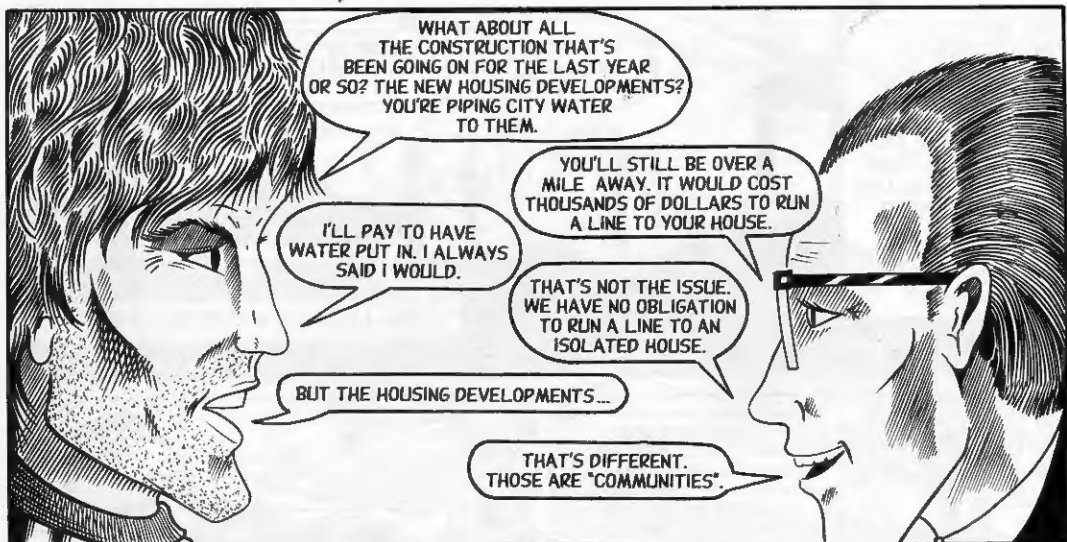
I SEE NOW. YOU'VE
FILED A PETITION FOR CITY
WATER OVER TWENTY-FIVE TIMES...
TWENTY-SEVEN TO BE EXACT.

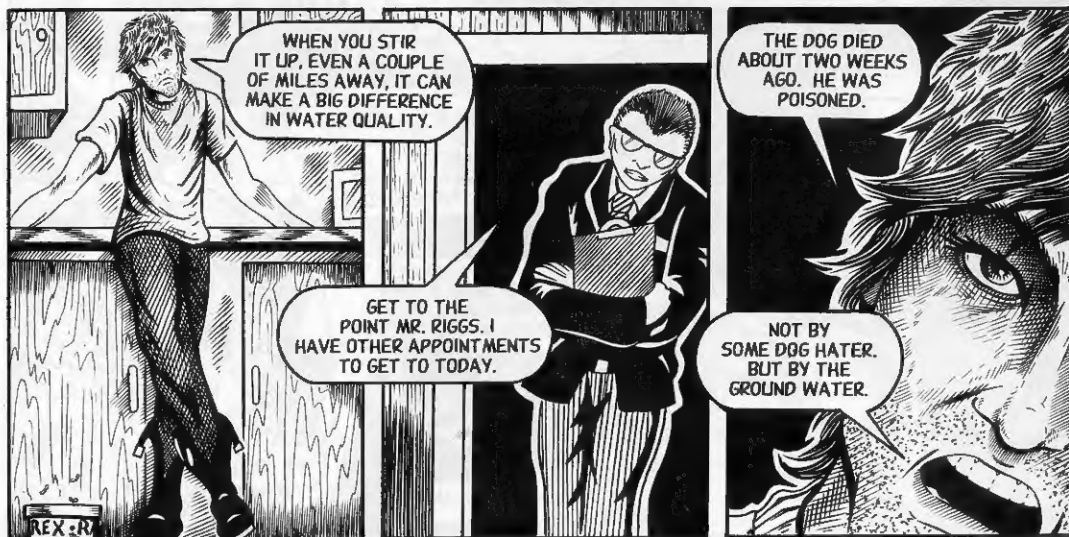
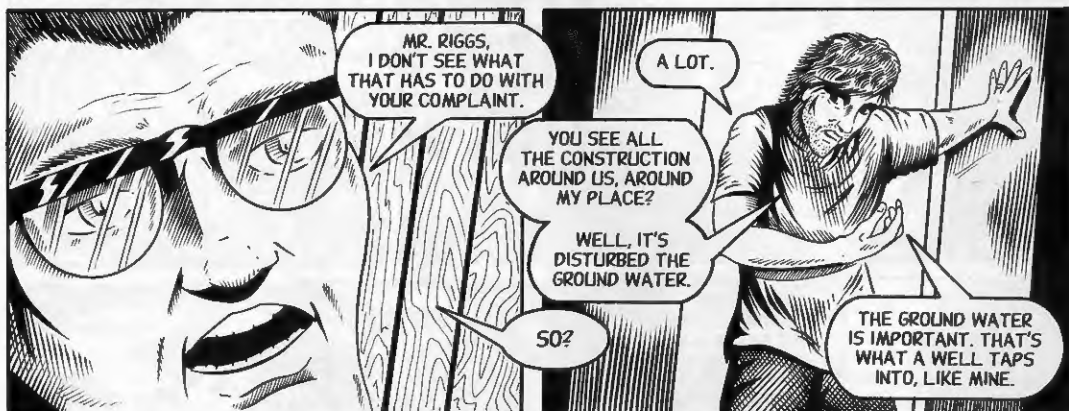
THAT'S MY COMPLAINT.

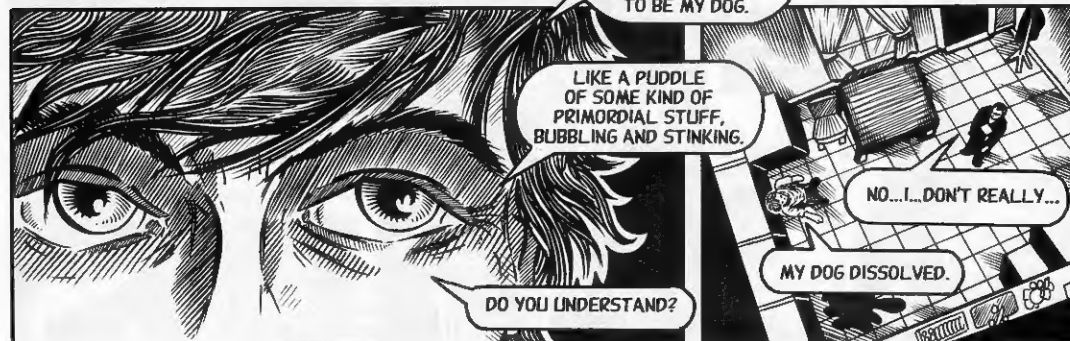
YOU CAN'T HAVE
CITY WATER. YOU ARE OVER
THREE MILES FROM THE NEAREST
MAIN, AND TWO MILES FROM
ANY PUBLIC SEWAGE
FACILITIES.

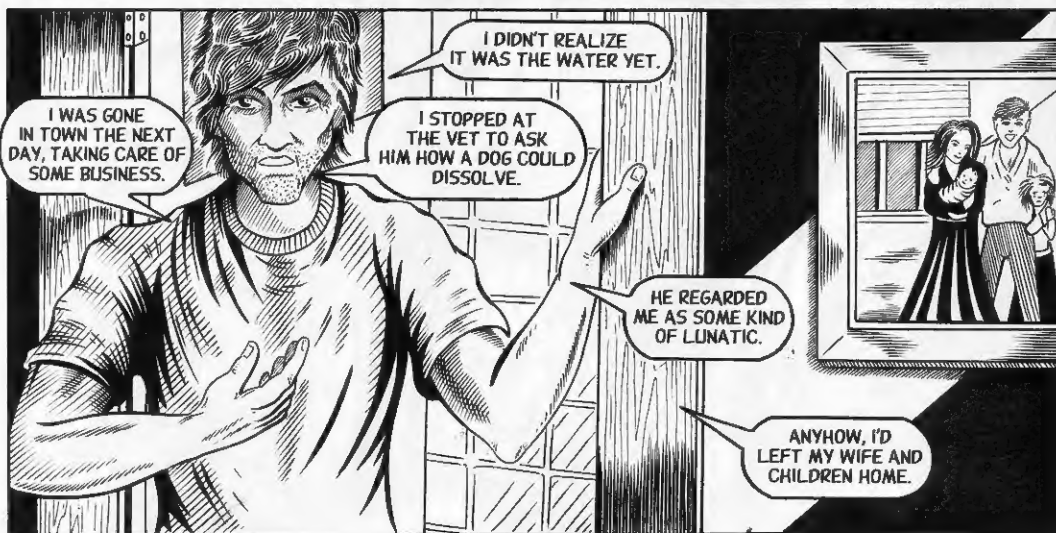
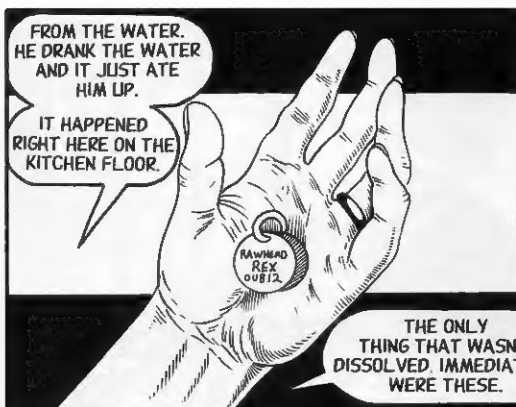
BESIDES, ACCORDING
TO WHAT'S RECORDED HERE,
YOU HAVE YOUR OWN
PRIVATE WELL.

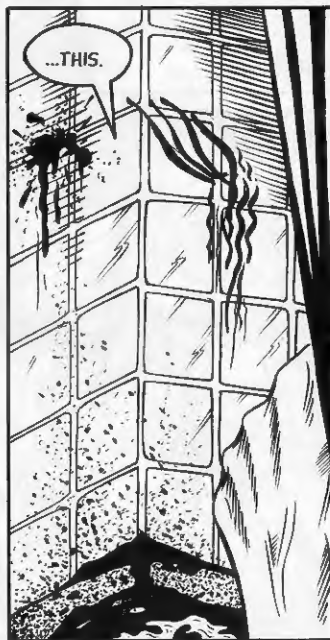
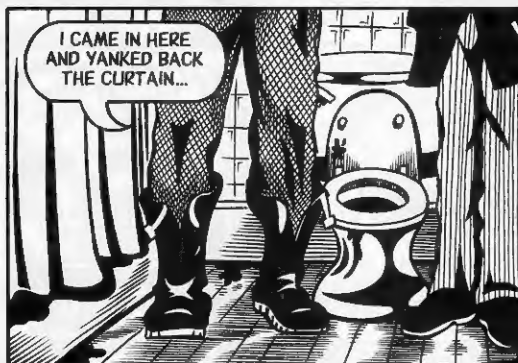
YOU DON'T REALLY
NEED ...








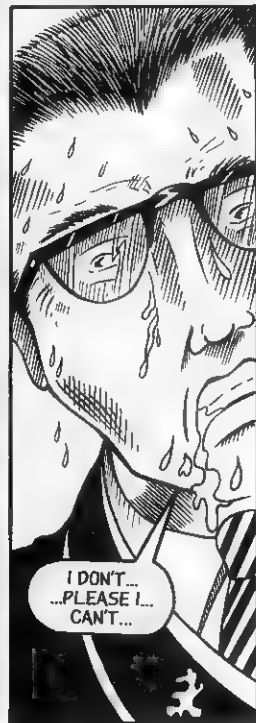


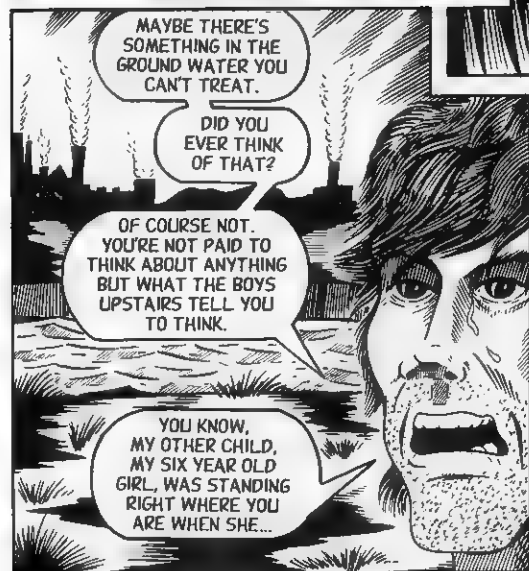
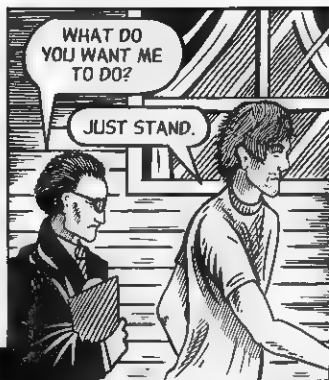
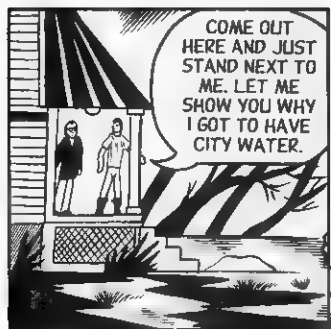




WHEN I FOUND THEM THEY
WERE STILL HALF-ALIVE.

I DIDN'T BOTHER TO INQUIRE
IF MY WIFE WAS ALL RIGHT.
A FLESHLESS HEAD DOESN'T
ANSWER QUESTIONS.









THERE IS NO ONE AROUND
TO HEAR HIM SCREAM.
NOT EVEN A CHIPMUNK
OR A RABBIT. ONLY THE
DEAD TREES SURROUNDING
MY LAND.



I WATCH HIM DISPASSIONATELY,
WITHOUT GUILT OR SHAME.



MY DAUGHTER HAD SUNK UP TO HER NAVEL
BY THE TIME I REACHED HER. I TRIED TO PULL
HER OUT, BUT I WAS IMMOBILIZED BY THE
"MAYBE". MAYBE IT WOULDN'T DO ANY GOOD.

THEN SHE WAS GONE. MY LITTLE GIRL.

I SHAKE MY HEAD. HE JUST
DIDN'T WANT TO LISTEN TO
ME, I GUESS. THEY NEVER DO.





AT THE PRINTER & COMING IN APRIL!

THE STEPHEN KING UNIVERSE

Stanley Wiater & Christopher Golden with Hank Wagner

Spanning 50 detailed chapters and more than 130,000 words in total length, *The Stephen King Universe* is an exhaustive look at all of Stephen King's fiction and is accurately subtitled: *A Guide to the Worlds of Stephen King*. Complete and updated through *Blood and Smoke*, this ground-breaking reference work also examines the motion pictures, miniseries, and screen- and teleplays that King has written over the course of his amazing career. Works such as *Sleepwalkers*, *Golden Years* and *Storm of the Century*. Appendices will also be included, covering topics such as Recommended Further Reading and Recommended Web Sites.

The basic thrust of *The Stephen King Universe* is to tie together -- for the very first time -- the various threads in terms of the characters and settings that have always existed in King's fiction. A few years ago, King himself admitted that all his worlds were truly part of the same universe, and this statement served as the co-authors' inspiration to assemble this critical guide for King's millions of loyal readers. *The Stephen King Universe* is the single most important non-fiction volume for every Stephen King library!

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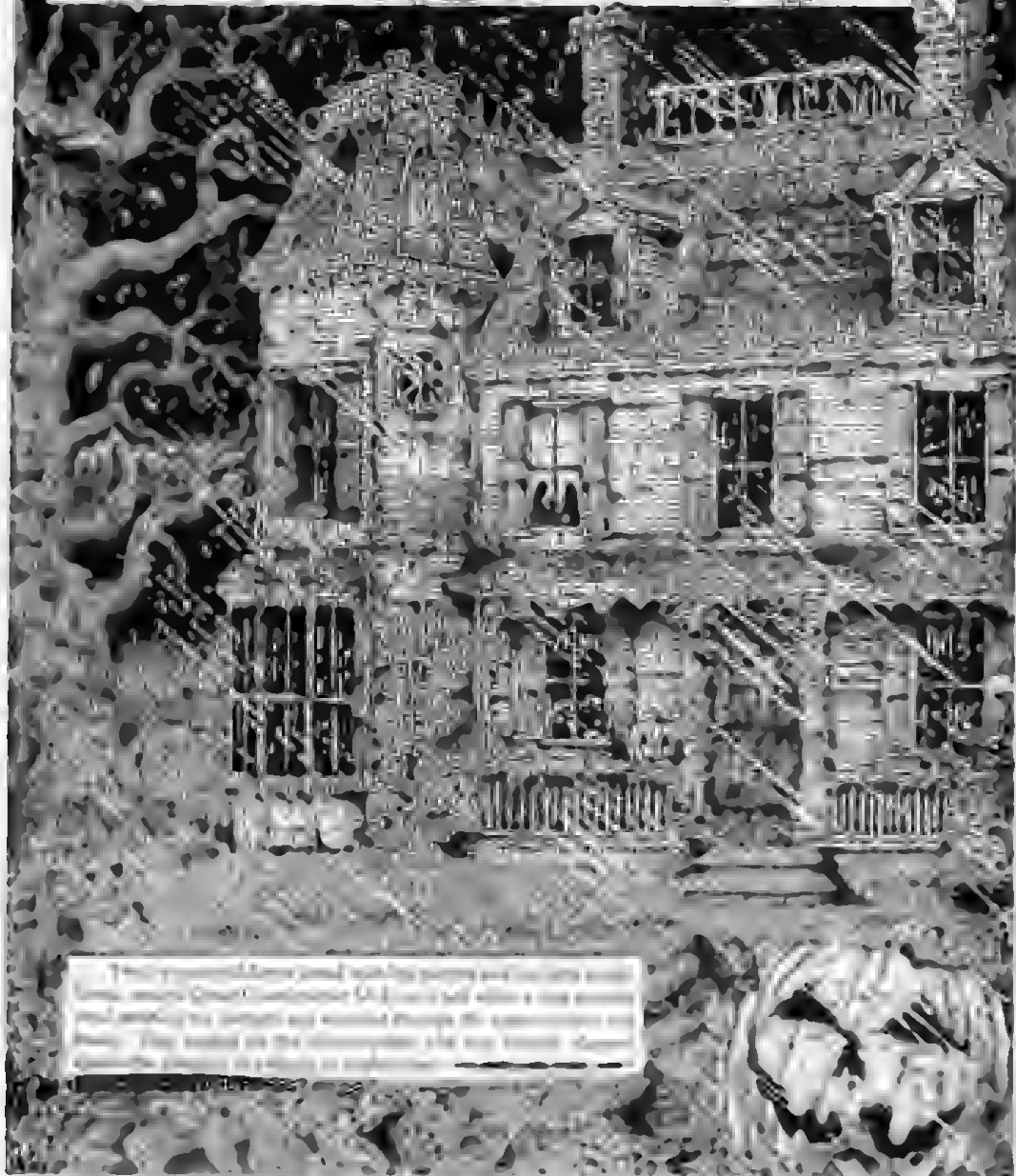
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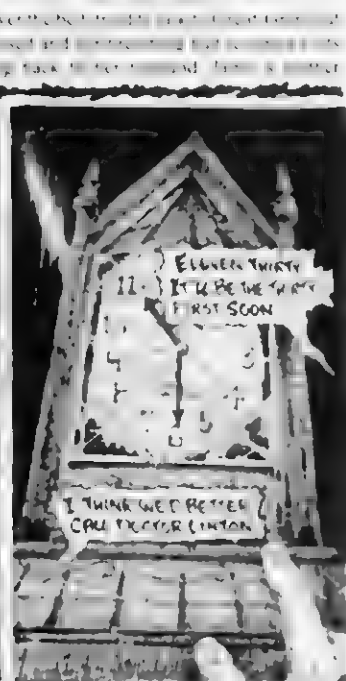
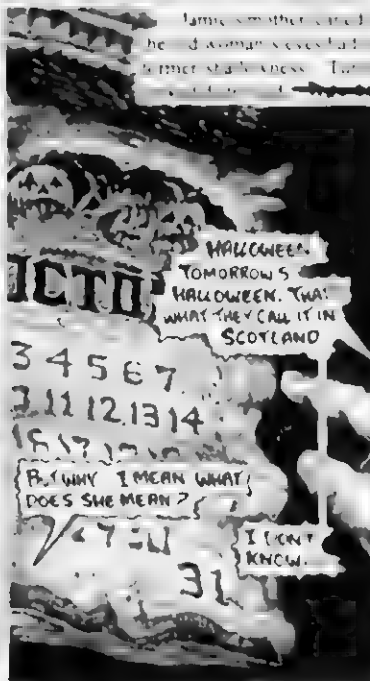
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THE CUTTY BLACK SOW



The Cutty Black Sow is a large, multi-story building that has been converted into a hotel. The building is made of brick and has many windows. The hotel is located in a wooded area. The hotel has a large, circular inset in the bottom right corner showing a close-up of a person's face.

The sheets rustled as the old woman stirred. Jamie saw her eyelids flutter and she opened her eyes. "What day is it?" she asked.



Hours later, Jamie lay in his bed in the darkness. The storm still battered the house and the trees around it. He could not fall asleep, was not even feeling tired. He'd been awake when Dr. Linton arrived, saw his mother in the downstairs toilet. The tall, white-haired doctor had looked in on Great-Gran, then returned downstairs to confer with Jamie's parents. The boy listened to Dr. Linton's words, "and I'm afraid there's nothing much more you can do to make her more comfortable. She's lapsed into a coma. Might hang on for weeks, or days, but it's hard to tell."

The wind kept stirring Jamie as he lay in his dark bed. Great-Gran told him one of those terribly impossible things that happen. She'd once been a part of his life. Rocked him as a baby, fed him, bathed him, and it was the stories about Scotland. To think of her as gone was like knowing when you woke up in the morning your right arm would be missing. Impossible. As if ever true. She had been a part of his life.

He didn't know how long he lay in bed without sleeping. Long enough for the storm to quiet and his parents to finally return to the bedroom. Long enough for the heavy clouds to part and for the moonlight to creep through his window. Jamie wanted to fall asleep, but

More time passed. In the silent house, he could hear every creak and groan of old wood, every hissing radiator pipe.

And then, just as he was about to fall asleep,

She sounded so bright and clear that he imagined she must have arisen from her coma. A spark of hope was ignited in him, and he slipped noiselessly from the bed to creep into her room at the end of the hall. The door was open and the room stalked by tall shadows of old furniture cast by the feeble glow of the night light.



Silently, Jamie approached the bed. If anything, the old woman looked worse than before and she spoke as though in a trance. But her words were soft and... clear.

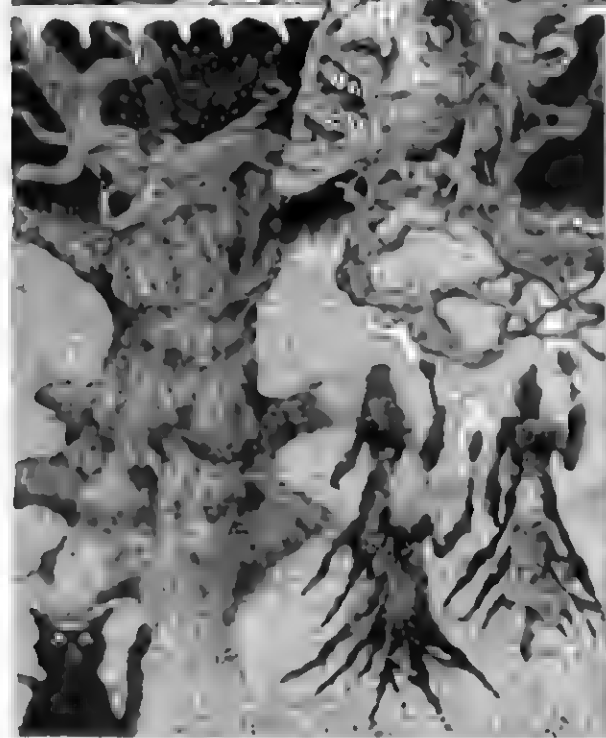
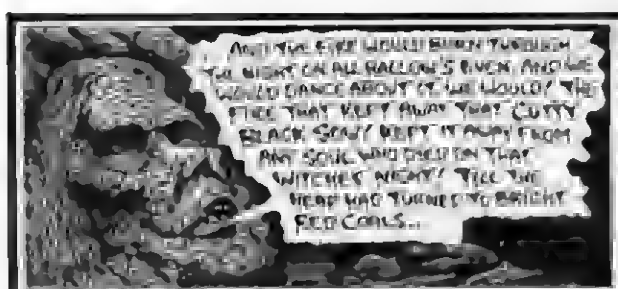


Jamie felt a chill race down his back. He thought of calling his parents, but they would only make him go back to bed. Yet he sensed an urgency in the old woman's voice.

Then he thought of his tape recorder, and moving quickly, silently, he retrieved it from his room. Turning it on, he captured the trance-like ramblings of the old woman.



PILE IT HIGH, WE WOULD! WITH STRAW, FURZE AND PEAT.. WHAT A BEAUTIFUL SAMHAGAN IT WOULD BE!



AN OLD WOMAN CALLED KATIE SCOTT
 AND ASK IN THE SUMMER A CIRCLE THEN
 INTO THAT CIRCLE WE WOULD PUT STONES
 - ONE MEMBER OF EACH FAMILY IN THE
 FAMILIES THE STONES WERE FOR SCULS
 AND ALL LING AS THEY STAYED
 INSIDE THE CIRCLE OF
 SAMNAGAN DE CUFFY
 BLACK CAMEL NOT HARM IS!



Jame listened as the old woman rambled. It was some memory, but I remembered it too. He tried to speak to her, but she was too old to hear him.

AND IN THE MOUNTAIN RAINING
 WE WENT TO THE CREEK AGAIN
 CAMELL - TO MAKE SURE THEY WERE
 IN THE MOUNTAIN RAINING
 AND TO MAKE SURE THEY WERE
 IN THE MOUNTAIN RAINING
 AND TO MAKE SURE THEY WERE
 IN THE MOUNTAIN RAINING



She would, for her he couldn't, but there was nothing more
 I could do. I breathing became jagged, watching in her hollow chest
 rise and fall, rise and fall, as if possessed by a cruel fate. Suddenly her body
 began to rise, then a figure passed over her bones. I still
 watched as the figure lifted her, rose under the darkness for an instant
 then fell back, her head falling to the floor of the pillow.



He had been in the room, and he knew it was gone. He had seen it
 in the room that had been there, but not. He felt empty, empty
 it was, he knew, from the pain, from the loss of the night.

GREAT GRON HAD BEEN KILLED
 FOR A THIRTY FIVE IN THE
 MORNINGS. SHE FROD ON
 HALLOWEEN.



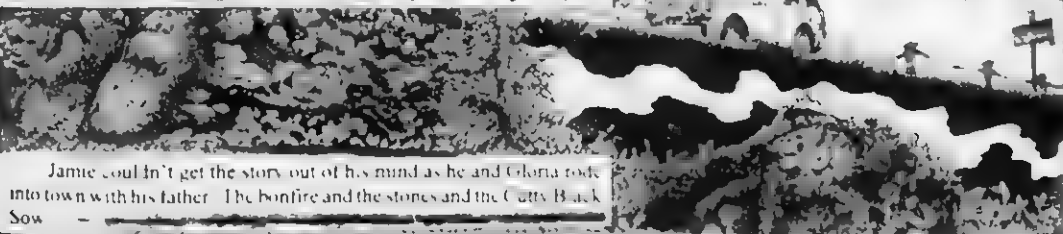
He had been in the room, and he knew it was gone. He had seen it
 in the room that had been there, but not. He felt empty, empty
 it was, he knew, from the pain, from the loss of the night.



LOVE THAT MORNING

He had been in the room, and he knew it was gone. He had seen it
 in the room that had been there, but not. He felt empty, empty
 it was, he knew, from the pain, from the loss of the night.

Listening to her words for the second time, he realized the old woman was fearful of dying on Halloween. She was telling him something—something important. Her people had always protected anybody who dies on that day. Protected them from the Catty Black Sow—whatever that was.



Jamie couldn't get the story out of his mind as he and Gloria rode into town with his father. The bonfire and the stories and the Catty Black Sow.

At school he waited until study hall just after lunch, then transcribed the recording into his math notebook. When it was written out, he was able to study words more carefully, and he became even more convinced that Great Gran had been giving him a message.



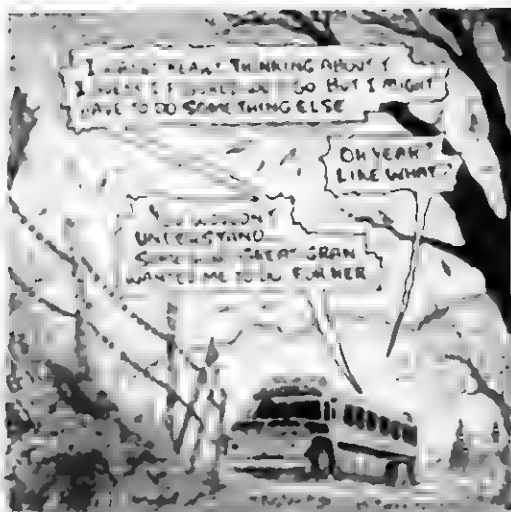
Jamie asked Miss Hall, the school librarian, for books about Scotland and Scottish folklore. Usually quiet and dour, Miss Hall volunteered that she was Scottish on her mother's side, and it was good to see young people interested in their heritage.

With her help, Jamie figured out a lot of what Great Gran had been talking about. A Samhain was a ritual bonfire, burned on Halloween night to protect the people from the forces of Evil, and to save the souls of any who died on the Witches' Day. There was nothing about the "Catty Black Sow," but Miss Hall told him that she would be happy to look it up when she went home that evening. Jamie thanked her and gave her his phone number, making the librarian promise to call if she discovered anything.

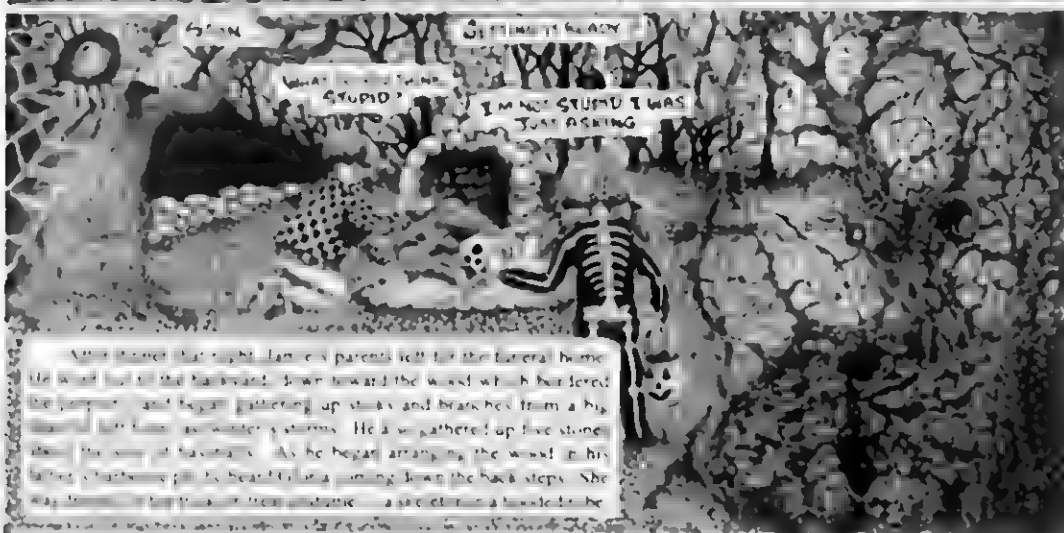


On his way home on the bus, Jamie planned his evening. He knew what he had to do for his great grandmother. Gloria kept interrupting his thoughts, and finally, he knew he had to talk to her.

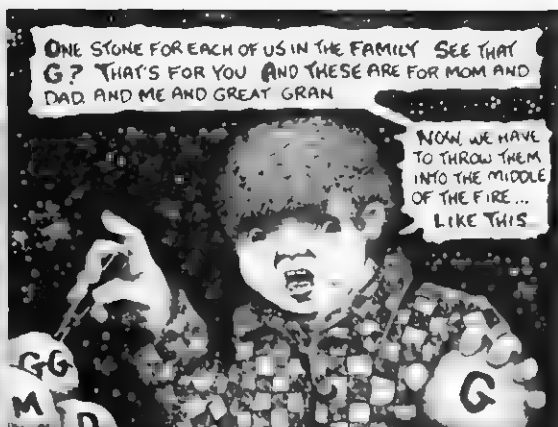




When the bus dropped them off at the house, Jamie's mother informed them that The Undertaker had picked up Great Gran. Jamie went into the house and sat in a swing. To his right was a barbecue pit and outside fireplace. If he was going to build a fire, that was the place. The yard was enclosed by tall oak and poplar trees, and a wind whistled through the brown and orange and yellow leaves, shaking them loose and blowing them down all around him. It was pretty, but he found it hard to feel that.

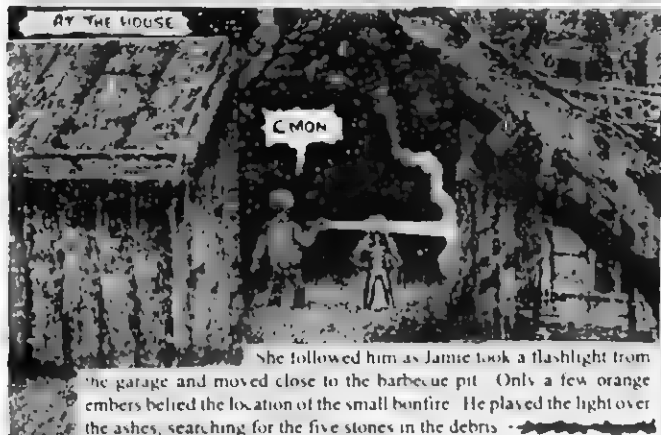
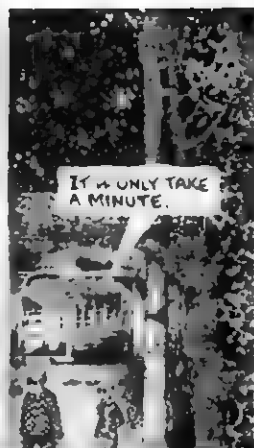


After dinner that night, Jamie's parents left for the funeral home. He went out to the barbecue, down toward the wood which had served the family, and began gathering up sticks and branches from a big pile left from the winter storms. He also gathered up five stones about the size of baseballs. As he began arranging the wood in his father's charcoal pit, he heard Gran's name being called from the back steps. She was there, she had to be there, she was there, a skeleton, a skeleton, he

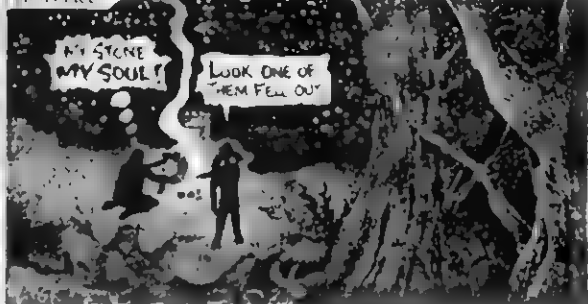


Jamie tossed Great Gran's stone into the center of the coals. Then he tossed all the others in, one by one, with a small amount of ceremony.



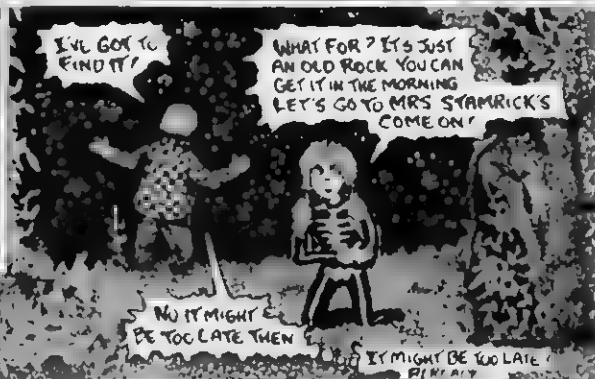


From the looks of the ashes and embers, the wood had collapsed, then spilled toward the edge of the firebrick. He directed the beam down to the patio and found the fifth stone amidst a scattering of ash. It had fallen from the fire, and he remembered his Great-Gran's words: "no stone should be missing or disturbed." He bent low and saw in the flashlight beam that it was the stone with a just legible "J" on its face.





But her fingers had already encircled it, had begun to pick it up. In that instant, Jamie felt a jolt of energy spike through him. His heart accelerated from a burst of adrenaline, and suddenly Gloria screamed



Despite Gloria's protests, she helped scan the lawn for the missing stone. She must have heard the urgency and fear in Jamie's voice because she even got down on her hands and knees to grope about in the grass.

When she found it, the stone was still hot, but cool enough to pick up. Jamie carefully returned it to the spot where he had first disturbed it and hoped that nothing would be wrong. After all, Gloria hadn't meant to touch it. Perhaps it would be all right since it was not yet morning.

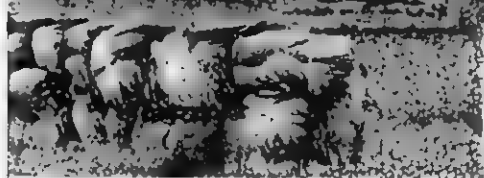


He and Gloria went to Mrs. Stammick's house two blocks away, and she welcomed them with affectionate hugs and kisses and mugs of hot chocolate. She spoke in saccharine tones and made a fuss over them.



Jamie sipped his cocoa and watched TV without actually paying attention. At one point he thought he heard something tapping on the windowpane, even though the others did not seem to notice. When he took his empty mug into the kitchen to place it on the sink, he heard another sound.

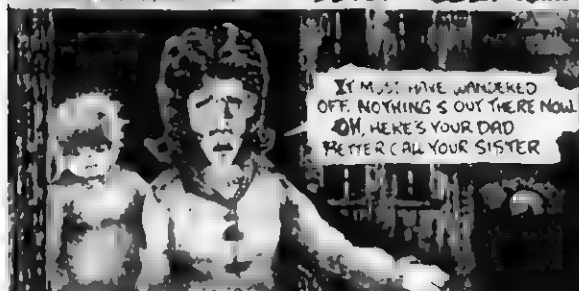
A thumping. Outside.



Something was padding across the wood floor of Mrs. Stamrick's back porch. It was rapid and relentless, as though some heavy-footed dog, a large dog, was pacing back and forth beyond the kitchen door.

Slowly, Jamie moved to the door, but could not bring himself to draw up the shade and peer out. The thumping footsteps continued and at one point he thought he heard another sound — a rough exhalation, a combination of a growl and a snort.

Moving quickly out of the kitchen, he told Mrs. Stamrick that it sounded like there was a big dog on her back porch. She walked past him into the kitchen, raised the shade and looked out. Seeing nothing, she opened the door, admitting a cool blast of face-slapping wind — the only thing that was out there.



AFTER THE CALL
FROM MISS HALL,
JAMIE WENT TO BED



It was at least a half-hour after his parents had also gone to bed when Jamie heard more of the strange sounds, the thumping footfalls of something in the yard beneath his window. His room faced the rear of the house, his window overlooking the roof of the back porch. Broken moonlight splintered the darkness as he slipped from the covers and forced himself to look out.

The jutting slant of the roof obscured his line of sight, and for a moment, he saw nothing unfamiliar. Then, for an instant, one of the shadows moved, seemed to step back into the deeper darkness of the yard.



Again came the faint sounds of something moving with a heavy-footed gait. And the distant, snoring breath he had heard once before.

The kinds of sounds a pig would make.

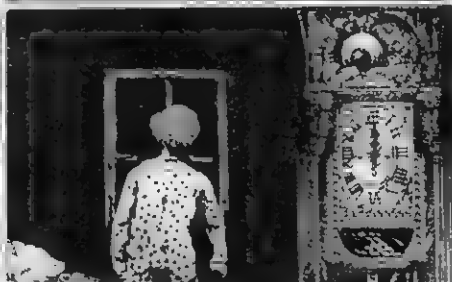
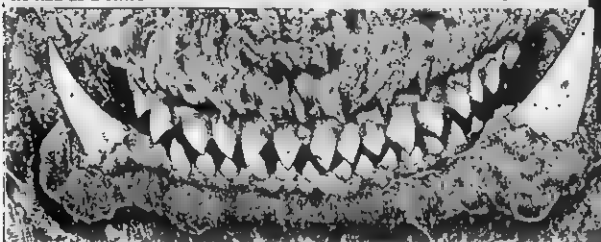
Jamie looked out his window. The yard seemed darker than before, but the embers of the fire in the distance seemed brighter.

until he realized that the embers were not brighter, but closer. And that the two fiercely glowing orbs were not coals at all.

They were eyes.

Backing away, he heard scraping sounds. Rough, abrasive, crunching sounds, as though something was scrambling for purchase on the side of the porch, something trying to climb up, towards his window.

The sounds were very loud now. The old wood of the house groaned as it was splintered. It was so loud! Why didn't his parents hear it, too! Jamie jumped into his bed, grasping at the covers the way he had as a child when he had been afraid of some terrible night-thing.



He must have cried out, although he didn't realize it, because he heard his father's voice calling him. Relief flooded through him as he heard his father's hand on the door knob.

JAMIE, ARE
YOU ALL RIGHT?

The door swung open, and he could see his father's silhouette against the bright light of the hall beyond. Quickly he glanced back to the window, and the burning eyes were gone. He felt silly as he tried to speak.

DAD! YEAH, IT'S
OKAY....

His father said nothing as he walked into the room, drawing close to the bed. In the darkness, he sat on the bed and drew his son close to him. Jamie relaxed in the comforting embrace, and put his arms around his father.

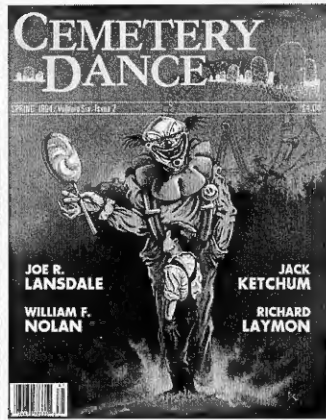
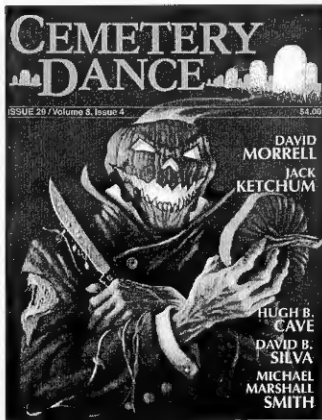
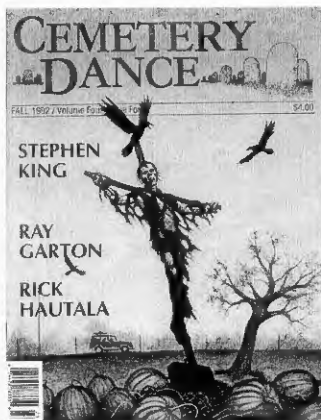
JUST A BAD
DREAM, I GUESS.

He was about to tell Dad how scared he had been, when his hands touched the back of the neck of the thing which held him, when he felt the close-cut, bristly hair . . .



END.

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